Liberation Deferred: *Korea, the United States, and the Eastern Asian World, 1943–1949*

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Abstract

America's occupation and liberation of southern Korea from Japanese rule has usually been examined as an example of Cold War diplomacy in which civilian and military officials working for the US government facilitated the rise to power of Korea's anticommunist far right as they confronted the Soviet occupation of northern Korea. Historians treat this history as a case study of US-Korea bilateral relations and rarely study its broader contexts. By contrast, this article explores the history of America's occupation of southern Korea in the context of comparative and connected histories, examining in particular the linked themes of liberation and decolonization. The narrative interrogates how Korea's independence from Japan in 1945 was similar to, or different from, big power diplomacy in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam, and how the United States and other big powers' responses to World War II in Asia impacted the subsequent history of empire and decolonization. It outlines the ways in which events in Korea were connected to the wider history of the American empire in Asia, and explores American military operations in World War II in colonial Southeast Asia as foreshadowing US occupation policy in Korea. This methodology helps us to rethink existing chronologies and to connect the world before and after 1945, while also better contextualizing Korean history, at perilous crossroads in 1945.

Keywords: liberation, Korean People's Republic, Yeo Unhyeong, Yi Yeoseong, liberal empire, United States, Korea, World War II, Cold War, decolonization, Southeast Asia, Philippines, Hukbalahap

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Introduction

The US Army's XXIV Corps began its occupation of southern Korea in early September 1945 amidst the dynamic expansion of revolutionary movements across Eastern Asia.[1] US officials in Washington had made crucial decisions about Korea—none more important than the division of the peninsula— and in Asia, American army soldiers were at the forefront of *de facto* US policy-making towards the radical organs extending their authority over the continent. The containment of these revolutionary movements in China, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, and elsewhere has historically been viewed in the context of early postwar Cold War diplomacy. Indeed, the US government initiative to divide occupied Korea into American and Soviet zones, along with the repression of the fledgling Korean People's Republic, is often interpreted as the opening gambit of the new bipolar competition for global spheres of influence.[2] There is significant truth in this interpretation, but efforts to arrest communism began before 1945, and in Asia the 1917–1945 era established critical precedents for the post-1945 containment strategies of the United States and its allies. One goal of this article is to facilitate our understanding of the importance of World War II—an unprecedented and sustained era of Soviet-American alliance—for the history of the United States' role in the containment of the left in Korea and other parts of Asia following Japan's defeat in 1945. Within this frame the essay explores novel topics in the context of Korean history, including the significance of US military operations on the Philippine island of Luzon during World War II, for the character and structure of Korea's post-1945 liberation.

Secondly, the narrative of this article ties the history of post-World War

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1. In this essay, Eastern Asia is defined as the group of colonies, territories, and countries located in Northeast and Southeast Asia, all bordering the Pacific Ocean, from the Indonesian archipelago northwards to the Soviet Union. This phrase is difficult to translate into Korean, a conceptual hole that has made it harder for historians to establish connected histories between Korea and Southeast Asia, especially ones that transcend the post-World War II era.
2. See, for example, Cumings (1981, xxvii, 226–227, 229–230).

II Northeast Asia to developments in Southeast Asia before, during, and immediately after that war, in the process highlighting the importance of connected history, in which two seemingly unrelated histories are linked through common yet often unacknowledged lineages, as a method of understanding global phenomena.[3] One key to understanding the linked history discussed in this article lies in the evolution of the American empire in Asia, of which the occupation of Korea in 1945 was only the most recent undertaking. Another is the role of anti-colonial leaders in Eastern Asia who sought to establish socialist-oriented world orders from the 1920s and 1930s onwards. A central site for the interchange of anti-colonial ideas amongst Asian leaders was Shanghai, where Koreans interacted with Asian anti-colonial nationalists from across the continent, sharing their common disillusionment and criticism of colonial rule, while sympathizing with each other's historical dilemmas and predicaments. In approach, this study adopts an inter-regional framework of analysis, examining Korean history within socio-political conditions in Northeast and Southeast Asia as well as North America, thereby encompassing inter-Asian connections as well as transpacific linkages.

Liberation and American Hegemony: Southern Korea, September-December 1945

American military officials and independence activists across Asia generally had antagonistic understandings of the meaning of *liberation*. The American notion was embodied in the very structure of the fighting associated with World War II in Asia: liberation would only occur with the defeat of Japan and the disarmament and return of its soldiers from its overseas empire to the home islands. A territory would be liberated with its occupation by American

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3. For studies of the concept of connected history see Subrahmanyam (1997, 2005). His larger project, partly emerging from the work of Joseph Fletcher, is to understand the early modern world and to rework "the history of South Asia into a larger Eurasian space of conjunctural movements" (Subrahmanyam 2005, ix–x).

soldiers, who would set up political institutions, constitutional systems, and new states with varying degrees of sovereignty that would be integrated into a global network of nations symbolized by the United Nations.[4] The reference to the international body of the UN was shorthand for the incorporation of new nations into a burgeoning global liberal order dominated by the United States. These ideas were embodied, in relation to Korea, in a series of documents produced by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC), an interdepartmental body managing the American government's international policies until 1947. A repeated refrain within the SWNCC 176 series was that southern Korea would be treated as a "liberated country," consistent with the stipulations of the 1943 Cairo Declaration. Koreans would remain liberated as long as American forces were not endangered by their actions.[5] The last phrase is important since it suggested the possibility of treating Koreans as non-liberated peoples if they resisted the policies of the military government. The reference to the 1943 declaration, penned in the shadows of the Egyptian pyramids, furthered America's wartime policy of establishing a trusteeship over Korea, one to be overseen by the United Nations. On September 4, the commanding general of XXIV Corps, General Hodge, sent a directive explaining his policy towards Korea to General Charles S. Harris, deputy for the military government. The document stated that "Korea, as an integral part of [the] Japanese Empire, was an enemy of the United States," and that American occupation forces would employ armed force "to quell civil disturbances." Even if Koreans had "high hopes for freedom and independence" there would be "no promise to the Korean people concerning any future from our government." The general's policy highlighted the politics of the American occupation as well as the limits of Korea's liberation (Kim 1970, 33–34). Confirming Hodge's approach, a memo

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4. An important exception to this process were territories that had become part of America's insular empire, such as Puerto Rico or Guam.
5. Korean History Database, SWNCC data, Annex A to SWNCC 176/3 and SWNCC176/8, "Basic Initial Directive to the Commander in Chief U.S. Army Forces in the Pacific for the Administration of Civil Affairs in Korea South of 38 Degrees North Latitude," https://db.history.go.kr/contemp/level.do?levelId=swncc_008. The phrasing was "[liberated] to the maximum extent consistent with the security of your forces."

written by Army Service Command XXIV Corps (ASCOM Korea) on the same day described Koreans as "semi-friendly."[6]

The contradictions in these policies became apparent to most Koreans, who recognized that they would be trading one colonial power for two other occupying powers, both of which would remain for years supervising Korea's independence. The new liberal international order brought with it coercive structures of power, ones that had an immediate impact on many of those who had formed the Korean People's Republic (KPR), established in the days leading up to the United States military occupation. John Hodge internalized the tensions in the American conceptions of liberation and independence, writing in the first days of the US occupation of Korea that "…one of the greatest difficulties in [the] maintenance [of] order is the idea firmly implanted in the mind of all Koreans that Korea is now a free and independent nation."[7] On that point he was certainly correct: Koreans welcomed the end of Japanese colonial rule, and even fêted Hodge on his trip from Incheon to Seoul, but they were neither free nor independent. Within a short period after arriving for occupation duties American military units began, in many areas of southern Korea, to dismantle the institutional bases of the Korean People's Republic, which had been set up with the view of gaining American acceptance and support.

The main force of the XXIV Corps arrived in Inchon on September 8. Within days, a G2 report of the 7th Division identified an ally in the Korean Democratic Party (Hanguk minjudang), supported by conservative landlords and Koreans who had collaborated with Japan. According to "reliable informants," a group that sponsored the Korean Democratic Party (KDP) and "who have made no public demonstrations," contained many who had been educated in America and were "willing to cooperate in every way." The report noted that these Koreans were "willing to let the American

6. "Operations Plan No. 1," September 4, 1945, 5, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Records of the Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940–1948, RG 407, Box 1105. An advance seventeen-member party of XXIV Corps landed at Kimpo airfield on September 4, 1945.

7. "G-3 Daily Situation Report," September 16, 1945, NARA, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940–1948, RG 407, Box 1104.

Army handle the political situation for the time being." By contrast, unnamed sources described those associated with "Lyuh Hyung Woon" (the American spelling of Yeo Unhyeong), as "rabble rousers [who] have started demonstrations in all sections of Kyongsang [Seoul]." The informants argued that although Lyuh might have sincere beliefs, four-fifths of his followers, including those in such organs as the Public Welfare Corps and the Korean Relief Association, were "Communistic."[8]

Though the KPR did contain some communists, its ranks included a politically diverse group of Koreans, and the decision by the KDP and its allies to call the Korean People's Republic communistic reflected a perspective on the world shaped by the Japanese colonial era and by an irrational fear of the nationalist-left in Korea. Yeo Unhyeong was Christian, and could be labeled a Christian socialist. He had negotiated the political compromise leading to the formation of the Korean People's Republic, which included conservatives, socialists, communists, and members of the Korean Provisional Government in China, including Kim Kyu-sik. Many of the major social and political goals of the KPR read like a left-liberal or moderate socialist agenda: an eight-hour workday, nationalization of industry, an end to child labor, universal suffrage, and Korean independence. Yet the organization wanted significant changes to the colonial socio-economic and political system, demanding major land reform and purges of Koreans who had collaborated with Japan in maintaining the repressive colonial regime, demands which antagonized the land-owning elite and formed the impetus to found the KDP. The new republic also had representatives in labor unions, supported the demands of workers, and wanted a more equitable distribution of resources within society.

Yeo was determined to establish a democratic state based on socialist ideas, and he expected the United States government to assist in this project. The KDP was also designed to gain American political support, and the

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8. "G-2 Periodic Report," 7th Infantry Division, September 13, 1945, NARA, Records of U.S. Theaters of War, World War II, RG 332, Box 48. It was common for US officials, including General Hodge, to use the word "communistic" to describe all leftist organizations that were not part of a communist party.

occupation set the tone and frame for southern Korea's forthcoming civil conflicts. Hodge played a significant role in this process, as his discontent with the people's committees and the inability of the middle-ground political groups to gain a following moved him to support the extremist anti-leftist policies of Korea's far right. Recognizing the popular support and superior organizational and mobilizational ability of KPR organs, he mused in mid-September 1945 that through union actions and threats of violence the people's committees were "trying to seize power before the more conservative groups can be organized." He posited that possible railway and utility strikes could require the military to intervene and run those services themselves. Furthermore, "ominous reports" from the countryside showed that farmers were influenced by "agitators" who criticized the US occupation. Rather than agitators, evidence suggests that Koreans were increasingly genuinely discontented with the dynamics of the occupation, demanding both independence and liberation in face of posted military regulations and soldiers who worked with the Korean police from the colonial era and who needed interpreters to work out occupation policy.[9] Hodge's fear of the left reinforced his support of the KDP, whom, he wrote, were "the well-known leaders" we are "inclined to regard favorably" and who now advocate "the return of Syngman Rhee and others of his group."[10] Though

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9. Fighting between Koreans and the colonial police, as well as beatings of police officers and chiefs, was a common occurrence across southern Korea in the early stages of the occupation; this conflict worsened over time. As early as the spring of 1945 requests by the civil affairs training organization in Monterey, California, for additional resources for the language needs in Korea were refused by the Department of the Army. See Korean History Database, US Army Forces in Korea. History of the United States Army Forces in Korea, Part III, https://db.history.go.kr/contemp/level.do?levelId=husa_003_0010. Translators remained in high demand and the lack of communication between Koreans and American military government units caused additional conflicts and contributed to poorly informed decisions.

10. "Resumé of the Situation," September 16, 1945, NARA, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940–1948, RG 407, Box 1104. Kim Ku, leader of the Korean Provisional Government in China, may have been one of "the others" referred to in the document, but Kim quickly alienated Hodge by attempting a coup d'état, effectively marginalizing his influence within the US military hierarchy. On the KPR, Kim Ku said that if they opposed his government, "he would deal with them just as Chiang

the general initially hoped Rhee would help resolve his concerns about what he believed were the communist politics of the people's committees, Rhee quickly abandoned the early KDP promise of cooperation with the military government. His insistence for a separate southern regime and the end of trusteeship plans exacerbated conflict south of the 38th parallel.

Clashes between supporters of the KPR and the KDP increased throughout the fall of 1945. Those who actively supported the KPR were generally younger than KDP politicians, and students sometimes took the lead in condemning the latter organization. In mid-October 1945 the Seoul People's Committee organized a parade to welcome the allied forces in an effort to accelerate Korean independence. The military government, however, declared the event illegal and US military police pursued and attacked students to disperse the crowds. In the wake of the confrontation, several student organizations criticized, not the military government, but the Korean Democratic Party, arguing it had convinced American officers to cancel the event. The militant rhetoric reflected an anger nurtured in the social violence of colonization: "Do you know who are the…traitors?" asked one handbill posted by the students. "They are members of the [KDP], who until just before the liberation of Korea had cooperated with the Japanese against America by working as a cat's paw for the gangster Japanese Imperialis[ts], and filled their own pockets by sucking [the] life-blood of Korean people."[11]

Over the course of October additional measures were taken against people's committees across the southern peninsula. The 50th Headquarters Company, for example, responsible for control over the city of Busan in southeastern Korea, reported the expansion of the authority of the Korean People's Republic into the local governments of Tongyeong, Changwon, Geumhae, Hadong, Yangsan, and Hyopcheon [Hapcheon] along with

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Kai-shek in suppressing the Yenan government." See "Civil Intelligence Section, SCAP. Occupational Trends Japan and Korea" December 21, 1945, 27, NARA, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940–1948, RG 407, Box 1119.

11. "G-2 Periodic Report," 7th Infantry Division, October 22, 1945, NARA, Records of U.S. Theaters of War, World War II, RG 332, USNA, RG 332, Box 48.

many towns and villages. According to the records of the 98th Military Government Headquarters, the "leftist" committees in "all of these Gun governments were deposed by Military troops and duly appointed officials installed."[12] Similar actions were taken in the Jeolla provinces, under occupation by the US 6th Division. According Donald S. MacDonald, stationed in Gwangju in 1945–1946, a combination of orders from Seoul, combined with decisions taken locally, resulted in the dissolution of people's committees, "some by use of considerable force. The last one that was abolished in our province was in Mokpo in January, 1946. These 'eradications' were performed by running in armored personnel carriers in a big show of force, informing the people's committees that they had been abolished and arresting some members as necessary." The first postwar governor of Jeollanam-do province was "a moderate physician" tied to the KPR, but the military government replaced him with "a Korean landowner who was famous for his conservative anti-Communist views." He was fluent in English and "therefore attractive to the anti-Communist Americans." Former Japanese era Koreans continued their work and "what was done in effect was to continue the Japanese structure" (ADST 1990, 14–15).

The dismantling of people's committees in the autumn of 1945 reached a turning point over the issue of Koreans' political right to call their state-in-being a "republic," since the word implied that sovereignty did not lie with the American occupiers, but with Koreans themselves. In December 1945 the American military government took the major step in formally banning the KPR from operating, as a state, effectively declaring the people's government an illegal entity. When writing to a relative about his goals and policies in Korea, Hodge openly confessed: "Flatly stated, one of our missions was to break down this Communist government [the KPR] outside of any directives and without benefit of backing by the Joint Chiefs of Staff or the State Department."[13]

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12. "Provincial Military Government History," 98th HQ and HQ Det MG Group, Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, RG 94, Box 21866. "Hyopcheon" is an older pronunciation, based on Chinese characters, of the contemporary city of Hapcheon.
13. See Cumings (1981, 194). Hodge was representative of army thinking about the left, and perceptions about *communism* in particular. MacArthur himself was strongly

The statement sheds light on a critical juncture in the discussions between the United States and the Soviet Union over the future of the divided peninsula: Hodge's decision to ban the KPR on December 12 came only days before the high-level scheduled meeting in Moscow to decide the formal character of Soviet-American cooperation over the Korean Peninsula. As Hodge and other officials of the military government knew, Russians had worked through local people's committees in northern Korea. In late August, Soviet forces even apparently abandoned an agreement with Japan to rule in part through provisional governors and began to negotiate with "the executive committee of the Korean people," a reference to the KPR-associated South Pyeongan Committee for the Preparation of Independence, led by Cho Man-sik.[14] Hodge's decision, therefore, sent an intransigent political signal to the Soviet Union, just prior to the start of the Moscow decisions, that there might be little hope of cooperation between the two superpowers over the future of inter-Korean politics.

Revolution, Counter-Revolution: The US, Japan, and China, 1945–1946

Events on the Korean Peninsula in the latter half of 1945 were part of a larger revolutionary wave sweeping Eastern Asia and rooted in the dynamics of World War II. The revolutions were met by the forces of counter-revolution, militarily, by both Japanese and American armies. Although not well known,

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anticommunist, and promoted conservative Christian beliefs. The Supreme Commander in Japan proclaimed to four Christian dignitaries in the autumn of 1945 that "Japan is a spiritual vacuum. If you do not fill it with Christianity, it will be filled with Communism. Send me 1,000 missionaries" (Woodward 1972, 243n19). Within this frame, the preferences given by the US military to conservative Korean Christians were part of a wider informal policy of containing communism while also promoting Christians to leadership roles in government and public policy.

14. "Daily Summary of Messages," August 30, 1945, NARA, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940–1948, RG 407, Box 1101. This information came from Japanese sources, and highlighted an effort to reinforce American fears of communism. On this theme see Caprio (2025).

soldiers in some Japanese units continued to fight after Japan's surrender on August 15. The Japanese government's efforts to contain the momentum of revolution across Asia were linked to its surrender, for the entry of the Soviet Union into the war in Asia was a key turning point in Japanese officials' acceptance of unconditional surrender outlined in the Potsdam Declaration issued by China, the United Kingdom, and the United States.[15] Preservation of the role of the emperor in Japanese society and politics was foremost in the minds of Japanese officials, and they tried, through diplomacy, to obtain a guarantee from the allies that the emperor would not lose authority. They recognized that a Soviet voice in the occupation of Japan would be a vote for the emperor's prosecution. Through mediators in Sweden and Switzerland, Japanese policymakers conveyed their government's "understanding" of the Potsdam Declaration, that the "sovereignty" of the Japanese emperor "would not be touched."[16] Efforts were even made by Japanese diplomats to retain postwar control over both Korea and Taiwan (Caprio 2025, 353n7). American military officials were cognizant of these efforts. In mid-September 1945, a G-3 memo noted that the Japanese military's decision to cooperate with American and allied forces across Asia was "of course inspired by orders from Tokyo." With respect to Korea, Japanese officials "probably have hope of partial salvation of their investments both material and spiritual by complying with our instructions and 'appeasing' the Koreans."[17]

Another means of influencing the occupying powers towards retaining Hirohito as emperor and accepting ongoing Japanese influence in Asia was to demonstrate solidarity with their former enemies in the continental fight against communism. In addition to diplomatic efforts, therefore, the

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15. For contrasting views on the diplomacy of the atomic bomb, see Hasegawa (2005, 2007) and Frank (1999).

16. See US Department of State (1969a, 625). The allies rejected this suggestion, as well as other requests, including that Tokyo be spared an occupation, that the occupying forces limit the extent of their occupation, and that Japanese POWs not be directed to perform compulsory labor (US Department of State 1969a, 668).

17. "Resumé of Situation," September 15, 1945, NARA, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940–1948, RG 407, Box 1103.

Japanese government authorized their soldiers to battle the geographic expansion of communism and revolutionary nationalism in both Northeast and Southeast Asia. Efforts to hold off the Soviet offensive in Manchuria, Sakhalin, and the Kuriles failed, however, as eleven Soviet armies pushed through impassable terrain, sometimes using novel amphibious river, swamp, and ocean-based strategies, including in offensives in marshy and watery Manchuria and against Japanese forces in Najin and Jeongjin on Korea's northeastern shore. In some cases, Soviet units achieved their objectives ten days ahead of schedule.[18] Even to the now under-manned and poorly-equipped Japanese armies in northeastern China the Soviet conquest was unexpectedly rapid. Some locally based generals ordered fighting to continue for several days after news of the surrender and the emperor's rescript to stop fighting reached the front lines. But they had been decisively defeated, and began to negotiate terms of surrender with Soviet soldiers in the last ten days of August.

In contrast to the relatively brief military engagements with Soviet armies in Manchuria, Korea, and Japanese islands, imperial troops in various areas of China and parts of Southeast Asia continued military operations for many months, and in some cases, years, after the formal end of hostilities. On September 3, the military intelligence section of the American Army Forces in the Pacific highlighted a report from eastern China, saying the "Japanese Secret Service in the Shanghai area was ordered by Tokyo on 12 August to continue operations on redoubled scale and to restore the influence of the Japanese Empire even though Japanese Armed Services were defeated."[19] Less than a week later, on the 18th, the senior Japanese general in China who had been made responsible for the surrender of Japanese soldiers, Okamura Yasuji, defined Japan's new policy

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18. For a study of the offensive using a series of case studies, consult Glantz (2003). See also a study produced by US Forces, Far East, and written by officers of the Kwantung Army, entitled *Record of Operations Against Soviet Russia on Northern and Western Fronts of Manchuria, and in Northern Korea (August 1945)*. The study was printed in 1950 and distributed by the US Army (US Forces, Far East 1950).
19. "Summary of Daily Messages," September 16, 1945, NARA, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940–1948, RG 407, Box 1104.

goals towards China as rehabilitating the economy under the Kuomintang (Guomindang) and assisting the Nationalists in unifying the country. His troops would "resolutely chastise" communists should they act on anti-Japanese impulse (Boyle 1972, 326). Japanese soldiers, along with their "puppet" allies, attacked Liuhokou, an important rail hub in northern Henan, which had been taken by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) forces at the end of August.[20] Other strategic sites were targets of Japanese armies and collaborating forces during this period, and on the 18th the office of Lieutenant General Albert Wedemeyer, who was chief of staff to Chinese president Chiang Kai-shek, sent a telegram to the Department of War and US chiefs of staff noting that Lunkou, on the Shandong coast, had been taken by the CCP on August 18, but was subsequently re-occupied by Japanese soldiers. On the 29th, "bitter fighting" between the two sides resulted in the seaport's return to CCP authority.[21] During this era Japanese soldiers cooperated with Kuomintang (KMT) armies, and at least one Chinese warlord general, Yen Xishan, negotiated the surrender of Japanese soldiers, only to incorporate them into his Shanxi-based military units. They defended the provincial capital, Taiyuan, from communist armies for four years (Gillin and Etter 1983, 500).

The US government formally supported a policy of continuing the United Front in China, in good measure because of evaluations about the inability of the Nationalist government to assert its authority over large parts of northern China and Manchuria. American officials also worried that large caches of Japanese arms would end up with CCP armies, which claimed rights to disarm their enemies. While General Order No. 1, issued by President Truman, stipulated those senior Japanese officers in China, except Manchuria, should surrender only to Nationalist forces, a separate message from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Wedemeyer allowed US soldiers

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20. "Summary of Daily Messages," September 16, 1945, NARA, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940–1948, RG 407, Box 1104.

21. "Summary of Daily Messages," August 30, 1945, NARA, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940–1948, RG 407, Box 1104; "Summary of Daily Messages," September 5, 1945, NARA, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940–1948, RG 407, Box 1102.

under his command, with the permission of Chiang, to temporarily accept enemy surrenders before transferring control over the soldiers to KMT troops (US Department of State 1969b, 528, 530). From late September and early October, US Marines occupied areas of northern China to assist in the assertion of KMT authority across the region. Chiang, dependent on American aid, advice, soldiers, and transport to fight the CCP, was very pleased with the decision, as it extended his army's control of strategic areas that were contested with communists.

In the fall of 1945, there were over 100,000 Japanese soldiers in areas where US Marines operated, and, as late as November, 300,000 Japanese troops remained in northern China (Frank and Shaw 1968, 542; US Department of State 1969b, 668). The Americans and Japanese cooperated with each other, even to the extent of jointly guarding rail lines. The admiral responsible for transporting the US Marines into the northern China theatre later reflected that the American soldiers "were in no hurry to have the Japanese withdraw, for they were useful allies. They protected the bigger cities and guarded the bridges and rail lines from communist-led guerrillas" (Wilson 1972, 34–35).

By mid-October it was clear that the CCP was on the losing end of the military battle in northern China. Wedemeyer, who believed the Chinese communists welcomed the extension of Soviet power and influence in Asia, had helped arrange the transport, by air and sea, of some half a million of Chiang's soldiers to northern China.[22] On October 14, US chargé in China, Walter Robertson, observed that CCP armies were unable to achieve military success since they were "no match for Central Govt troops acting with American assistance" (US Department of State 1969b, 580). Battlefield victories emboldened Chiang, who remarked to Wedemeyer in November that the marines' occupation zones should be extended "to include long lines of communication" so they could be utilized "as a base of maneuver." The American general reported back to Washington, writing that Chiang was no longer interested in repatriating Japanese units; instead, "his plans and efforts are now concentrated upon conducting a campaign against

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22. See Jay Taylor (2009, 316).

the Chinese Communists" (US Department of State 1969a, 655). This information worried the US chiefs of staff, who pursued the contradictory objectives of containing the CCP and yet not getting engaged in a land war in Asia.

In December, the Truman administration announced the George Marshall mission, an effort by the wartime general to contain Chinese communism by negotiating a political settlement between the CCP and KMT. The ultimate goal was to expedite the disarmament of communist armies and their integration into a non-political national Chinese army controlled by the Nationalists within a Chinese governmental system that included the CCP and other political parties. On the 16th, Truman publicly announced that China's non-KMT armies would be "eliminated" after "the institution of a broadly representative government" (United States Department of State 1945, 946). A relieved Mao recognized that the United States government had now tempered its support of Chiang's efforts to defeat the CCP on the battlefield. By contrast, Chiang responded to the president's speech by again underscoring the importance of ridding China of communist military units (Westad 2003, 31; Taylor 2009, 329). Chiang's demand, as Odd Arne Westad has argued, was "the price of peace" (Westad 2012, 289). The Chinese president's diplomacy thus echoed that of Syngman Rhee during the Korean War, when the South Korean leader proclaimed that only the unilateral surrender of North Korean armies would convince him to end the fighting.

By early 1946 Stalin sought to sabotage efforts to unify China while also responding to American demands to order his forces to leave northeast China. His decision to withdraw Soviet troops in March 1946 opened prospects for Mao and the CCP to establish strongholds in a region with resources and at a significant distance from Nationalist supply routes.[23] While Mao had followed Stalin's earlier direction in August 1945 to negotiate

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23. A US intelligence source in Yenan reported in early September of the CCP's efforts to move soldiers out of the base and into north and northeast China. See Comgenchina to WARCOS, September 7, 1945, NARA, RG 407, Box 1102. Stalin's policy in late 1945 zig-zagged between holding back the supply of Japanese arms to the Chinese communists and allowing his armies to provide them this military equipment. See Pantsov (2023, 397–398).

with the KMT, and now continued talks with Marshall, he also bolstered the Chinese Red Army's strategic position in Manchuria. Chiang soon ordered his armies into the northeast, engulfing the country in full-blown civil war.

Unbeknownst to Japanese officials who designed diplomatic and military strategies to moderate the occupation of Japan, battle communism in China, preserve Japanese influence in Asia, and sway Americans towards maintaining the institution of the emperor, MacArthur and his leading advisors had already decided, even before the end of World War II, not only to retain the imperial institution, but also Hirohito as monarch. As in Korea, occupation authorities in Japan intended to return conservative anticommunist elites to power and appeal to conservative opinion. A central figure shaping the occupation's policy towards the emperor had been the head of MacArthur's psychological warfare program, Brigadier General Bonner Fellers. In early 1946, Fellers defended his efforts to retain Hirohito as emperor by saying this strategy would place "major obstacles" in the Soviet Union's efforts to "bring about the communization of the entire world."[24] Fellers and MacArthur both tended to see communism as a global conspiracy. Fellers' argument, formulated in 1944 and subsequently adopted by MacArthur, was to separate the emperor from the militarists who had been active since the invasion of Manchuria in 1931, driving a "wedge" between the two.[25] Once the Japanese public came to realize that "gangster militarists" had misled the emperor, Fellers claimed, "the conservative, tolerant element of Japan which has long been driven underground possibly may come into its own." Significantly, Fellers made a religious analogy, which reflected his support for an older generation of Japanese officials as well as his own anti-leftist orientation of occupation policy: "Hanging of the Emperor…would be comparable to the crucifixion of Christ to us." Those who advocated the extermination of Japanese were wrong, since such a

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24. For an analysis of Feller's conversation with former Japanese admiral Yonei, in which he made these comments, see Bix (1995, 343–346). Bix criticizes both Feller and MacArthur for spreading antisemitic views in Japan.

25. An excellent exposition of the wartime history of Fellers' thinking can be found in Dower (1999, 280). MacArthur embraced the wedge analogy no later than May 1945. During the occupation of Japan, Fellers was MacArthur's military secretary.

policy would only result in a needless killing of civilians, and would "belie our Christianity" (Dower 1999, 282–283).

In a speech at Santo Thomas University in Manila in late August 1945, MacArthur echoed Fellers' religious sentiments about the occupation. According to the Supreme Commander, Christianity, along with democracy and "the essence of Western culture" had survived the war and "the East" would now "be opened to an enlightened age." The universalist overtones and clichés in his address harkened the occupation to religious duty: "to mankind some day will come a realization that the same sun which the Creator in His infinite wisdom has endowed all the peoples on earth gives light and warmth to the entire universe—both to the East and West—and all hesitance against assimilation of the cultural strength of one by the other will eventually disappear."[26]

MacArthur envisaged a new world for the Japanese population, but historians have also pointed to fundamental continuities in Japanese history in the twenty years following the invasion of Manchuria. John Dower, for example, has written that "Japan remained under the control of fundamentally military regimes from the early 1930s straight through to 1952." Despite the righteous goals and rhetoric, MacArthur and his subordinates "ruled their new domain as neocolonial overlords, beyond challenge or criticism, as inviolate as the emperor and his officials had ever been" (Dower 1999, 27). American occupation officials colluded with royalists at the emperor's court, and made a significant effort to coordinate a policy that placed responsibility for the war on Tōjō Hideki, who cooperated with their plans at the war crimes trials (Bix 1995, 345–346).

In late January 1946, MacArthur replied to a request from Washington to investigate Hirohito for war crimes. SCAP had already made clear, in internal memos, that no in-depth investigation would occur, and the Supreme Commander tailored his response appropriately, writing in a vague and verbose fashion that "No specific and tangible evidence has been uncovered with regard to his exact activities which might connect him in

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26. "MacArthur Sees Peace," *New York Times*, August 26, 1945, 2. One wonders about MacArthur's definition of creator.

varying degree [sic] with the political decisions of the Japanese Empire during the last decade." Instead, he argued, prosecuting and indicting Hirohito would unleash a veritable revolution in Japan, possibly involving the collapse of government, an end to "civilized practices" and "underground chaos and disorder amounting to guerilla warfare in the mountainous and outlying regions." In MacArthur's end-of-world vision, democratic rule would expire and "some form of intense regimentation probably along communistic line [sic] would arise from the mutilated masses." The telegram underlined the link, at least in MacArthur's mind, between the treatment of the emperor and the prospects for communism in Japan. To maintain order, he wrote, the occupation would require another million soldiers.[27]

In a broad sense, MacArthur's telegram reflected the anticommunist orientation of successive American occupations across Eastern Asia. For the general and his aides, the preservation of the emperor was the lynchpin in a pan-Pacific containment strategy: through the imperial institution, Japan would be the central symbol of counter-revolution in the new empire. As Hirohito told an American reporter in September 1945, "immediate revolutionary change…was neither possible nor desirable."[28] This perspective also explains Fellers' comment, cited above, that the emperor was a major barrier to the spread of communism around the world. Hirohito was foundational for legitimizing the regional containment of communism, including the suppression and curbing of local communist parties in Japan, Korea, and China, and across Eastern Asia in general.[29] These parties had

27. The telegram is available in United States Department of State (1971, 395–397). For a discussion of SCAP and MacArthur's letter, see Dower (1999, 297; 324–325).
28. "The Emperor Bows," *New York Times*, September 30, 1945, 71. Here Hirohito was referring to changes in government in Japan, but the comment has universal meaning.
29. In January 1946, the Japanese Communist Party relaxed its position on the imperial institution, saying the emperor should be shed of his political power, but that the future of the monarchy should he decided by the Japanese people. Concerned officials in Washington sent SCAP a message warning that this new position would open the possibility of coalition governments between socialists and communists in Japan. See "Washington to CINCAFPAC High Level," January 18, 1945, NARA, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940–1948, RG 407, Box 1122.

been at the forefront in criticizing the expansion of Japanese imperial power across Asia, and were vocal proponents of prosecuting local elites who had collaborated with Japan during the war. By associating socialists and other political groupings with local communists, American occupiers censored a wide range of opposition to their policies of cooperating with elites in Korea and elsewhere in the region who had worked closely with leaders of the Japanese Empire prior to 1945. Additionally, by focusing on the actions of Japanese "militarists" after 1931, Fellers' arguments implicitly sanctioned the history of the empire prior to that date, suggesting SCAP's acquiescence to Japan's early colonial power in places like Korea, Taiwan, and the Ryukyus.[30] Discussions about the early postwar history of Hirohito have focused on Japan-US relations, but declaring him a war criminal or abolishing the institution of the emperor would have impacted not only Japan, but also the wider framework in which MacArthur and his subordinates were establishing the bases of American hegemony across Eastern Asia from 1945 onwards: it would have sent broader signals to those societies that changes at the top would be needed for collaborators in their own communities. Prosecuting the emperor would have undermined the entire regional anticommunist power structure being constructed by American occupying soldiers. Including the history of Southeast Asia in our narrative will further elucidate this wider context for Korea's occupation history and decolonization.

Koreans and Filipinos in Revolutionary Eastern Asia

Historians of Korea's relationship with America have too often ignored one of the most important ties that United States governments had in Asia prior to the 1941 war with Japan—that with the Philippines. The historiography on US-Philippine relations has focused on bilateral relations, but recent outstanding books have highlighted the wider national security, imperial,

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30. The Ryukyus never regained their autonomy and remained under US occupation until 1972, when they were incorporated into Japan.

and anticommunist strands of American policy.[31] By examining the relationship between Korea, the Philippines, and the United States, this essay both complements and extends the themes of these works.

Understanding the dynamics of US-Philippine relations for Korea's relationship to the United States is important, in part, because the islands were constituent elements of America's overseas empire, integrated into the US at the time of the Spanish-American war of 1898, along with Cuba and Puerto Rico. US forces immediately faced significant opposition from Filipinos who had fought a grizzly, devastating, and unsuccessful war of independence.[32] The pre-1946 history of the Philippines thus helps us situate Koreans and Filipinos as colonized peoples from two empires and offers opportunities to examine some key facets of their anti-imperial and decolonizing projects.[33]

In the aftermath of the March First Movement, a small number of Koreans were fascinated by the Philippine islands and saw them as part of the wider colonial world that needed to be decolonized and granted political and social freedom. This group of Koreans included communists who engaged Filipinos at the University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow,[34] but also anarchists and leftists who projected both anger at the Filipinos' colonial position and also sympathy for their plight. A key site of intellectual interchange between Koreans and Filipinos, a place where they exchanged anti-colonial insights and ideas about independence and freedom, was Shanghai, which attracted intellectuals and activists from throughout colonial Asia in the 1920s and 1930s.

One Korean who investigated the dynamics of American colonialism in the Philippines and who identified with Filipinos' psychological, political, and social hardships was Yeo Unhyeong, who was at that time a key figure

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31. See especially, Jung (2022) and Woods (2020).
32. For example, Miller (1982).
33. Jung does this, for example, by assessing the history of the Taft-Katsura Agreement, and also by looking at labor conflicts and solidarities between Koreans and Japanese in other areas of the American empire, such as Hawai'i. See chapters 2 and 4 of *Menace to Empire* (Jung 2022).
34. See Woods (2020, 37).

in the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai. In 1924, Yeo took part in the March First independence commemoration organized at the Baptist Church Hall on Minguo Road, a major site of Korean nationalist, Christian, and radical politics for many years. According to Japanese spies, Yeo arrived at the church event in the early afternoon accompanied by two Indian nationalists and a Filipino socialist named Santos.[35] In addition to these figures, there were twenty Chinese and five hundred Koreans attending the event.

According to a report entitled "disobedient Koreans at Shanghai," written by the Japanese consul general in the treaty port, the Filipino, Santos, held "great sympathy for Korea's situation." He attended the celebration of Korea's declaration of independence to offer congratulations, and stated: "I cannot suppress my indignation at the plunder and oppression inflicted by the powerful nations upon the weak in the world today." He affirmed feelings of "even deeper sympathy for the situation of your [Korean] people."[36] These comments were made in English and translated into Korean by Yeo. The ceremonies concluded with a speech by An Chang Ho, who had arrived in Shanghai from travels in North China.

The following year, in July, Yeo attended another meeting in Shanghai designed to promote solidarity amongst Asia's colonial populations, including Koreans, Filipinos, Taiwanese, Chinese, Japanese, and Indians. A few years after that he went on a tour, coaching a Chinese university soccer team to Southeast Asia, which people from Northeast Asia commonly referred to as the "South Seas" (Nanyang). By this time Yeo had acquired Chinese citizenship. In Singapore, he criticized British colonialism and

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35. It is probable that this person was Pedro Abd Santos, the founder of the Socialist Party in the Philippines and key activist in the Hukbalahap movement on the island of Luzon during World War II. He was imprisoned by the Japanese and died in 1945, shortly after his release.

36. "Shanhai futei senjin no dokuritsu kinen shukuga jōkyō no ken" (Report on the Conditions Surrounding the Independence Commemoration Celebrations by Disobedient Koreans in Shanghai), Kimitsu dai 42go, Secret Document No. 42, Yada Shichitarō, Consul General in Shanghai, to Matsui Keishirō, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, March 3, 1924, https://db.history.go.kr/id/haf_077_0540.

was ordered by UK authorities to leave the territory. Continuing to the Philippines with his sports team, Yeo delivered four speeches in Manila "to gatherings of several hundred people, denouncing white imperialist aggression."[37] The speech highlighted the theme of race, and Euro-American colonialism in Asia, then popular amongst a number of anti-colonial activists across Asia. Yeo, however, would have criticized pan-Asianism that justified Japan's colonization of Korea, a theme, for example, in the works of the influential anti-colonial activist Taraknath Das (Jung 2022, 153-154). Yeo also recommended that Filipinos create a "South Seas Islands Federal Republic" to replace the American colonial regime (Mongyang Yeo Unhyeong Archive Collection 1936, 33). This project may partly have been a function of Yeo's Christian socialism, as he hoped the union would heal conflicts between Muslims and Christians on the islands. It was also a response to the concerns of the Filipino left who worried that independence from the United States might engender other independence movements, especially by the Moros (Y. Yi 1931). Angered and fearful of the political and subversive implications and impact of Yeo's comments, authorities in the Philippines seized his travel documents and detained Yeo for one week before allowing him to return to Shanghai (Mongyang Yeo Unhyeong Archive Collection 1936, 33). Once he returned, British officials in the treaty port, in an act of inter-racial imperial solidarity, collaborated with Japanese consular diplomats in arresting Yeo and deporting him to Korea, where he was imprisoned for several years. British-Japanese cooperative efforts in Shanghai to suppress anti-colonial sentiment were a common occurrence in this era, reflecting the solidarity of imperial powers and the continuing impact of the now defunct Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Another Korean involved in the creation and administration of the Korean People's Republic who demonstrated an abiding interest in the anti-colonial politics of the Philippines was Yi Yeoseong. In significant ways Yi fits

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37. See Song (1971, 249–250). One source says Yeo coached a baseball team, but this seems unlikely in Singapore and British Malaya, where he also travelled. It is possible that an athletic team could play both baseball and football, but this possibility is unproven. For a period during the American occupation Yeo was chairman of the Korean Athletic Association.

Bruce Cumings' paradigm of a Korean intellectual who claimed adherence to communism, but whose ideology was deeply nationalist in character. In 1946, Yi supported Yeo Unhyeong, rather than join Pak Heonyeong's South Korean Workers' Party. By 1948, however, he had become disillusioned with the politics of Korea's deferred liberation and went to northern Korea. And, as Vladimir Tikhonov has shown, Yi's ideas, non-dogmatic and flexible, were also "profoundly internationalist."[38] In the 1920s, Yi shared his time in Shanghai with Yeo, and it was there that Yi wrote about anti-imperialism from a global perspective (Tikhonov 2021, 267). It was also not long after Yeo Unhyeong's arrest that Yi returned to Korea, in late 1929.[39] Tikhonov demonstrates that Yi understood the differences between America's liberal empire and Japan's assimilationist strategies, with the former allowing indigenous political input into the colonial system and eventual independence for the islands (Tikhonov 2021, 279). Even so, Yi adopted a critical perspective on the American empire, arguing that the timing of the end of colonialism in the Philippines would be resolved through "the movement of the Filipinos themselves." From the Spanish-American War, argued Yi, Filipinos had "exposed American hypocrisy both domestically and in the US mainland, arousing American fears and stirring public opinion in the United States." Pointedly, this perspective underlined the importance of agency for Koreans as they fought Japanese colonialism. His writing emphasized the ideological contradictions of maintaining empire while championing the cause of democracy: "Americans, who once loudly cried out for freedom and liberated themselves from Britain, cannot but realize the contradiction in their imperialist domination of Hawaii, Guam, the Philippines, and their imperialist interventions in Cuba, Panama, and Nicaragua." If these contradictions could not be concealed, there were two paths the US could take: "either coercion or recognition of independence." For Yi, the decision would impact "global colonial policy," suggesting

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38. See Vladimir Tikhonov's depiction of Yi (Tikhonov 2021, 261–297).
39. Despite his arrest by Japanese authorities, Yeo was relieved to be back in Korea after numerous years abroad, and it was from Korea that he was then prepared to make his contribution to Korean independence.

leverage for Korea's future as well, if the path taken led to independence (Y. Yi 1931).

Writing before the onset of the crisis in Manchuria, Yi did not predict the onset of war in Eastern Asia. The other major liberal empire, ruled by British officials, devolved political power onto South Asians in the interwar years, but the timing of India and Pakistan's independence in 1947 was primarily tied to the politics of the Labour government and to the severe economic crisis of postwar Britain. Despite the United States government's management of Philippine independence in 1946, after the Japanese surrender the big powers of Europe re-asserted their colonial systems throughout Eastern Asia. Although the long-term goal of American policymakers was to establish a state-based international system, the Truman administration generally acquiesced to the return of European colonial authorities to Southeast Asia as part of its Europe-centered international strategy of re-configuring the capitalist world economy.

Filipino Anti-Colonial Movements and World War II

Yi Yeoseong's understanding of Filipino agency in the decolonization of the Philippines was shaped by trends in the transpacific political economy in the initial decades of the 20th century, when Filipino landlords on Luzon opened new lands for crops to be cultivated and exported to American markets. Following the Russian Revolution, socialist and communist movements surged in popularity. As commercial agriculture spread over the rich plains of central Luzon, peasants began to organize collectively against landlords in an effort to mediate poverty, regain lost lands, lower rents, and improve living conditions. From about the mid-1920s there was a deterioration in relations between rural gentry and peasants. When challenged, some landlords turned to government authorities, who often sided with the landed elite. Provincial officials, for example, authorized the Philippine Constabulary (PC) to arrest tenants for going on strike or engaging in other acts deemed illegal. In these conditions, and in the context of poverty and indebtedness, it was common for peasants to leave their

existing sugar or rice tenancies in search of better conditions with other landlords.[40] Politically, the left gained strength in the interwar era, and in 1940 won many mayoral elections in the provinces of Pampanga and Tarlac, which became major bases of support for the Hukbalahap movement during World War II and after (Smith 1963, 20).

After World War I, American officials in the Philippines identified socialist, communist, and labor activists as dangerous radicals to be monitored and prosecuted. As Colleen Woods has observed, "like other colonial powers in the region, the US colonial state in the Philippines repressed communism as well as other radical labor and anticolonial movements through increased policing, mass imprisonment, and the criminalization of party-based communist politics." The institutions of power created by the United States in the Philippines mirrored these views so that Filipinos as well as American officials "branded dissent as subversion" (Woods 2020, 11) and associated criticism of the existing political system with un-American and deviant behavior. This was the context in which Yeo Unhyeong was deported in 1929. World War II offered alternative options for American policy in the Philippines, but these pathways were anathema to MacArthur and his subordinates, who reinforced and returned to prewar practices.

The Japanese conquest of the islands in late 1941 was coordinated with the attack on Pearl Harbor and offensives throughout Southeast Asia. In the aftermath of the American defeat, significant numbers of Filipino political elites collaborated with the Japanese occupiers. The new imperial rulers modified and adapted existing colonial structures of power, including the Philippine Constabulary, in order to assist in Japan's wartime rule over the colony. Anti-colonial resistance figures drew critical attention to these Filipino collaborators, most of whom had previously supported American authority across the islands, and included prominent officials at multiple levels of authority.

Criticism of these collaborators was especially strong from peasants of Central Luzon, who, in 1942, established the coalition of leftist-communist

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40. For background, see Kerkvliet (1977, chapter 1; 26–29).

"Hukbalahap" (or the 'People's Anti-Japanese Army') underground resistance movement. As one member of the organization, Hilario Felipe, recalled after the war, people joined the movement because "there was no place to hide" from the Japanese soldiers, who were "stealing, killing, and raping." The "Huks" wanted "to defeat these invaders" and their local allies, so they also "turned against the hacenderos and big landowners. Of all things, many of them contributed to the Japanese government! They gave rice and money to the Japanese while everyone else suffered. They also left for Manila and other places" (Kerkvliet 1977, 68–69).

The Hukbalahap military leader, Luis Taruc, wrote that their wartime activities were different from other resistance efforts in the Philippines "in the strong peasant unions and organizations of the people that existed there before the war. It gave the movement a mass base, and made the armed forces indistinguishable from the people." Politically, the resistance had revolutionary goals, "from which we would emerge free men in every sense of the word." The war, in short, was an opportunity to transform social relations on the island, and significantly weaken the authority of landlords. This would be done by building political structures empowering the peasantry: "Our political purpose was to discredit the puppet regime and to destroy its influence, while at the same time building the concept of a functioning democracy. For this we projected the idea of free people's councils in every community" (Taruc 1953, 56, 60–61).[41] For these areas, liberation was closely tied to political goals linked to the representation of people at local as well as national levels. The centrality, within the Korean People's Republic, of people's committees, was part of a broader regional and global engagement with ideas of representation rooted in the interwar era and tied to local and national notions of democratic governance and liberation.

In the Philippines, American soldiers who had taken up armed resistance after the fall of Corregidor simplistically looked upon Hukbalahaps as anti-American for their refusal to subordinate their

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41. In addition to Korea, people's committees existed in a number of countries, including Vietnam, Indonesia, India, Yugoslavia, and China.

military structures to the US-led units and for their leftist politics. They made no distinction between socialist and communist ideologies, so that the Hukbalahap movement was usually described and understood as monolithically "communist," in similar ways that Hodge described the Korean People's Republic. The Hukbalahap were much more complex than was commonly perceived, and there was significant diversity amongst the many groups distributed across a number of provinces in central and southern Luzon. Labor within the organization was coordinated partly by gender, with men in military units and women managing important propaganda, communications, intelligence, medical, and recruiting operations in the various barrios.[42] Huk military squadrons were difficult to control and there was deviation from military orders from the center. In some cases, personal animosities shaped policy, and some units coerced support from local populations.[43]

Some effort was made to coordinate the American-led resistance movements with the Hukbalahaps, and relations between the groups were initially good under the authority of Lieutenant Colonel Claude Thorp, but after his capture and murder by Japanese soldiers in the fall of 1942, American-Huk relations deteriorated. According to Thorpe's adjutant, American soldiers were accused of stealing guns from Huks in early 1942, and when a meeting took place to discuss the issue, some Americans thought Huks were outflanking them and fired on them. Huks nursed an American hurt in the conflict and tried to organize another conference, but "the USAFFE began killing Hukbalahaps on sight."[44] Fighting continued, and also involved additional violence between Filipinos. According to a memoir by an American soldier on Luzon, Ray Hunt, "we eventually waged war against the Huks quite as much as against the Japanese" (Hunt and

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42. For a history of women in the movement during World War II, as well as the importance of political, kinship and friendship networks in the Hukbalahap movement, see Lanzona (2009, chapter 1).

43. "Reports Relating to Hukbalahap, 1945," Special Report No. 3, "Hukbalahap and the United Front Movement," 5, USNA RG 496, Assistant Chief of Staff, Records of General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area and US Army Forces, Pacific, Box 338.

44. "Reports Relating to Hukbalahap, 1945," Special Report No. 3, 9.

Norling 1986, 108–109; 105).[45]

Additionally, the USAFFE (United States Army Forces in the Far East) guerrilla fighters worked out a secret agreement with the collaborating pro-Japanese Filipino constabulary to allow Filipino resistance members to lead attacks against Huks and their allies.[46] This strategy, of working with a collaborating Filipino military unit, to militarily attack another resistance movement that was perceived as communist, can be viewed as the original act of containment policy in Eastern Asia in the 1940s. That it occurred during the Big Three alliance of World War II made it exceptional.

The anti-Huk strategy was not an isolated case of a US-led resistance unit determining local policy in the absence of higher coordination, but was buttressed by intelligence evaluations of the operations of the Hukbalahap during and after the war. In late 1944, US G-2 intelligence noted that, in east-central Luzon, the "main mission" of the local American-commanded guerrilla unit was "fighting the communistic Hukbalahaps in Central Luzon."[47] In short, before the Philippine-Hukbalahap conflicts of the later 1940s and early 1950s, American officers fought Huks directly with a combination of pro-Japanese and pro-American Filipino soldiers. This civil violence was part of the military operations of the American colonial regime in World War II, and brought Filipinos into war with each other, which also affected, in negative ways, US soldiers' relationships with Hukbalahap. As in the Japanese colonial empire, when Koreans fought Koreans in the 1930s and 1940s, the postwar contestation and conflicts in the Philippines were rooted in World War II violence. The fighting on Luzon during the war was a blueprint for the longer-term containment of Hukbalahaps. It was followed up by additional bureaucratic efforts to weaken the authority of the Huks within Philippine society in the late wartime and early postwar era.

During the war, Hukbalahap soldiers declared their allegiance to the Philippine Commonwealth Government in exile, headed by Manuel

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45. The Hunt and Norling narrative is disjointed. For Taruc's perspective on these events see chapter 17 in Taruc (1953), "Huk and Anti-Huk."
46. "Reports Relating to Hukbalahap," 9. The report dates the agreement with the collaborating unit as the summer of 1944, though other evidence in the archives suggests 1943.
47. Consult United States Far East Command (1948, 11).

Quezon in the United States until his death in 1944, and then his second-in-command, Sergio Osmeña. Hukbalahap supporters expected ongoing American assistance for their envisioned political and social revolution. They also articulated a strategy of expanding Hukbalahap influence in areas under Japanese control through military offensives in conjunction with US forces. To accomplish this goal, according to a document found amongst Pedro Abd Santos' papers, Hukbalahap squadrons would be sent to the as yet unliberated provinces "for the purpose of helping our American Allies drive the Japs out, and for the purpose of extending the practice of democracy in those regions." The G2 report citing this evidence remained unconvinced, noting that "democracy" needed "to be uniquely defined!"[48] indicating an inflexible definition of democracy, unwilling to accept practice that fused American political culture with others adapted from 20th-century revolutionary experience, particularly the Filipino revolution of World War II.

The report also criticized Hukbalahap adherence to Commonwealth laws through their provisional provincial and municipal councils, arguing that "it thus becomes a matter of placing justice in the hands of a revolutionary body sanctioned by neither the American Army nor the Commonwealth Government,"[49] defining authority as exclusively resting with colonial authorities and those who collaborated with them. Local governments remained illegitimate without sanction of the imperial power, and the report assumed that "democracy" could only emanate from a top-down system still rooted in an unreformed colonial regime as it had existed prior to the start of World War II. This background meant, as Cullather has remarked, that when American soldiers "entered central Luzon in early 1945, they came as invaders rather than as liberators" (Cullather 1994, 48).

The US military asserted its rule through censorship, as it would do in southern Korea when it banned, in 1946, the publication of *Haebang ilbo*, the mouth piece of support for the Korean People's Republic. In the Philippines, occupation authorities required newspapers and printed material published in the province of Nueva Ecija, a focal point for the

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48. "Reports Relating to the Hukbalahap," Special Report No. 3, 24.
49. "Reports Relating to the Hukbalahap," Special Report No. 3, 26.

Hukbalahap movement, to be delivered first to the US Army's 6th Division Counter-intelligence Corps (CIC), which would read and censor material deemed improper.[50] Strenuous efforts were also made by CIC agents to demilitarize and disarm Huk units. Another means through which the military's de facto containment policy operated in 1945 was to refuse to recognize the legitimacy of Hukbalahap guerrilla resistance groups' military operations during the war, and thus to prevent the soldiers from accessing postwar compensation for their service. By contrast, groups that cooperated with American forces in the conflict were given such recognition and had access to financial resources. These monies were important to the former guerrillas and formed a key part of their efforts to obtain economic security in the aftermath of the fighting.[51]

In a relatively uncommon documented case, one Hukbalahap organization received limited recognition for its military service between April 1, 1945 and September 26, 1945. First Lieutenant Elpidio Tumibay of the Dimasalang guerrilla organization, however, requested the US Army to back-date the service of this unit to March 29, 1942 because its activities were "a well-known fact in the guerrilla history of the Philippines…[and] because this unit shed blood against the enemy and accepted all the tortures that the Japanese Army could perform." A ten-page list of military actions taken against Japanese targets during the war accompanied the application. Despite a recommendation from the highest-ranking Filipino officer in the US army in the Philippines, the US G2 intelligence head for Central Luzon, that Huks were "the best guerrilla organization on the island," a group of other officers opposed any change, largely on the basis of the political activities of the Dimasalang unit. Lieutenant Colonel Anderson argued, for example, that the movement was "anti-American and anti-

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50. "Reports Relating to the Hukbalahap," Special Report No. 3, 23.
51. In his book on the political economy of US-Philippine relations in this era, Nick Cullather writes that the Philippines was one of the few places in the world that did not experience a dollar shortage in the immediate postwar era. American goods were available in the territory and purchased by Filipinos. The salary benefits for former guerrilla soldiers were an important part of income and a means of social mobility and status after the war (Cullather 1994, 44).

Philippine Commonwealth, and that the leaders believed in the principles of communism."[52]

This history is relevant for contextualizing American military containment policy during the occupation of Korea, partly because some of the same military units that operated in the Philippines were also involved in the occupation of southern Korea. For example, the XXIV Army fought on the island of Leyte, and the general staff would have known about the Hukbalahap from their time there and interactions with other units. Knowledge of the Hukbalahaps, also available through US military intelligence reports, would only have sustained Hodge's anticommunist outlook. More directly, units from the 6th Division, which participated in the fighting on Luzon, including central and southern Luzon, were later sent to southern Korea to occupy the Jeolla-do provinces. This included the Counter-intelligence Corps of the division, which was involved in reporting and containing the leftist politics of the Philippine guerrillas on Luzon. Another military unit involved in occupations in both theaters was the 40th Division, which traveled from Luzon to occupy the Gyeongsang-do provinces. These linkages may not be the reason the Korean People's Republic and the Hukbalahap experienced intersecting experiences under American occupation—other US military units would likely have developed very similar methods and procedures—but they reinforce the ties between occupation-empire and containment that existed in two seemingly disparate parts of Eastern Asia and connected the region in ways that have not yet been articulated in the literature on the histories of containment and decolonization.

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52. "Report on the Hukbalahaps," c. June 1947, Record Group 407: Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1905–1981 Series: Guerrilla Unit Recognition Files, 1941–1948. File 118-4 Dimasalang Forces, Hukbalahap. Significantly, the one person who supported the change was a Filipino officer, Narciso Manzano, the highest-ranking Filipino serving under MacArthur. In 1945, the chief of staff of the Philippine military asked Manzano to take his position upon the former's retirement from duty, but the appointment was vetoed by MacArthur's intelligence aide, Major General Courtney Whitney. On MacArthur's veto see https://www.positivelyfilipino.com/magazine/a-soldier-and-a-gentleman The author of the piece, Craig Scharlin, has a biography coming out on Manzano, which unfortunately was not available at the time of writing.

Empire and the Cold War in Eastern Asia, 1943–1949

In the Philippines, Douglas MacArthur and American forces in the Pacific took the lead in shaping the frame of political debate on the islands, not only by marginalizing the Hukbalahaps, but also by showing favoritism to a particular politician, Manuel Roxas. The problem, from MacArthur's point of view, was that Roxas had collaborated with Japan, so he concocted a history that Roxas had been rescued by US forces. In reality, Roxas had simply run away from the Japanese into the arms of waiting American soldiers (Cullather 1994, 46). MacArthur had known Roxas well in the 1930s, had had significant economic dealings with him, and, by publicly standing up for his loyalty had launched his postwar peacetime political career while purposefully undercutting Sergio Osmeña, the first post-Japanese era president of the Philippines. As MacArthur commented to a visiting American politician, "I can't work with [Sergio] Osmeña" (Cullather 1994, 46–47). The American general thus engaged in diplomatic activity well beyond his role as military commander to assist Roxas in the competition for the postwar presidency. This experience acted as precursor for MacArthur's resuscitation of Emperor Hirohito after 1945. Efforts to prosecute Filipino collaborators were moribund.

In the closing months of World War II, US troops jailed and disarmed the Huks, marginalizing their position within Philippine and Luzon society. On the other hand, the end of the war also allowed Hukbalahap soldiers and their supporters to extend their political alliances, and they established a "Democratic Alliance," involving a network of trade unions and the Philippine Communist Party. The Alliance supported Osmeña in the 1946 elections, and even though Osmeña lost, President Roxas' position vis-à-vis the Congress was weak. The Alliance continued its prewar political successes, taking seven of the eight congressional ridings in central Luzon. Strategically, the president would need to make political compromises to get legislation passed, a situation which permitted the Alliance and its allies to influence the country's politics. For Roxas, ending the battle would require disarming the civil guards and thus alienating his political base. The regime thus decided to attack the Alliance, and forced all the congressmen from the

group to resign their seats, accusing them of political corruption and vote-rigging, while exaggerating the charges (Cullather 1994, 51).

The Philippines acquired a significant degree of internal sovereignty on July 4, 1946, but in the context of a national economic crisis and growing social protest. In central Luzon, landowners turned to civil guards to impose order, and Huk units reconstituted themselves for protection. The government tried to legislate more favorable crop-sharing rules between the peasants and landlords, but the latter refused to obey the law and violence escalated. The Hukbalahap politicians made moderate demands for change, but the conflict continued, with the Philippine Constabulary participating in political violence and murder.[53]

World War II had created an opening for political and social change, but fear of the left and a rigid and reactionary class structure had closed those possibilities in the Philippines by 1947. On the island of Luzon, the contest for power was decided in favor of the pre-war ruling system. Independence for the Philippines in 1946 thus had limited impact on the country. The significant opposition to land reform, which the landholding elite embodied in their conflict with the Huks and other socio-political groups, meant continued economic inequality in the country and broad political continuity with the prewar world. For the island of Luzon, the opportunity for liberation had been indefinitely deferred by a combination of US occupation policies, the return to power of the prewar elite, and the actions of those elites before and after the integration of the Philippines into the international political system as an ally of the United States in the Cold War.

The history of the American empire in the Philippines is relevant for southern Korea's early postwar history in that while the Philippine state

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53. In the later 1940s, many officials within the US government did not see the Hukbalahaps as a major threat: they were a rather marginal military force of less than 3,000 members. Even within the Department of Defense, concerned as it was about the global and regional implications of Filipino communism, officials believed a negotiated settlement would be possible. United States military officials during World War II had laid the basis for an anti-guerrilla war strategy, and it was the Philippine elite that made the main decisions to go to war against the Hukbalahaps in the 1940s and 1950s. Those decisions were then backed by the US administrations. See Cullather (1994, chapter 2).

achieved a high degree of internal autonomy in 1946, its sovereignty was incomplete, particularly in the fields of defense and internal economic policy. In general, as an empire, America's tendency was to work towards establishing protectorates or partial colonies, and then, over time, to permit these territories to gain more autonomy. The original template for this process was Cuba, which became a protectorate in 1901—after a three-year military occupation—under the 1901 Platt Amendment, which lasted until 1935. The Philippines experienced a much longer period of occupation than Cuba. The territory gained an important degree of autonomy under the so-called Commonwealth in 1935, with the prospect of gaining more control over domestic and foreign policy in the future. Foreign and defense policy rested with the United States, underlying the Philippines' position as a protectorate, though the limitations of the government in the area of economic policy extended the protectorate into the realm of a semi-colonial relationship into World War II. Independence in 1946 was accompanied by continued limitations on national sovereignty. The US Congress, for example, passed the Bell Trade Act, which stipulated that American citizens would have "parity" with Filipinos in business and investment opportunities in the Philippines. The Philippine government assented to its terms in the spring of 1946, but only with difficulty. Militarily, a bases agreement in 1947 granted US armed forces rights to 23 bases, an immense territory and without cost, for 99 years. American extraterritoriality was tied to the treaty, in the area of American judicial jurisdiction over American personnel on the base, though less authority than similar agreements negotiated elsewhere, for example, in the United Kingdom (Cullather 1994, chapter 2). The debates in the Philippines over the agreement highlighted Filipino concern over America's continued imperial influence. The Philippines had gained autonomy but was now firmly ensconced in America's regional hegemony. The bilateral relationship can be understood in relation to liberal empire, and the creation, in the context of events during World War II, of a territory largely independent in its domestic sovereignty, and tied closely to the anticommunist foreign policy objectives of the United States.

South Korea was also embedded in the structure of American overseas empire-building in this era, though in somewhat different ways than the

Philippines. Strategically, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not view the territory important enough to station military bases. This feature of US policy emerged after the 1953 Korean armistice. In the early postwar years there was strong popular sentiment in the United States to demobilize soldiers, and money spent on the military significantly decreased. Louis Johnson, secretary of defense, four years after World War II, supported significant cuts to America's defense spending. In the Philippines, the base agreements negotiated by the United States in 1947 remained underfunded and sparsely inhabited until after the war in Korea.

In 1948, nine days after southern Korea gained formal autonomy, the country was incorporated into the American empire as a protectorate, under a 1948 treaty that is rarely discussed. The US commanding general in Korea gained extraterritorial judicial control over all individuals serving under his command, as well as "control over areas and facilities of vital importance (such as ports, camps, railways, lines of communication, airfields, etc.) which he deems necessary in order to accomplish the transfer of authority to the Government of the Republic of Korea and the withdrawal of United States occupation forces from Korea in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Korea."[54] With this agreement, South Korea became part of a series of territories going back to Cuba and the Philippines that had gained a degree of independence but were tied to America's strategic global policies. Syngman Rhee's leadership was key, and the agreement was signed not with the Korean legislature, but with Rhee himself. It went further than the Filipino agreement of 1947 in granting extraterritoriality to the United States but was limited in duration, lasting into 1949, as America ended its formal occupation and put in place a constabulary that would become the basis for the South Korean military. Technically, then, to this day South Korea was theoretically sovereign for about one year of its existence, between 1949 and 1950; with North Korea's invasion, it became a full-fledged protectorate of the United States through its incorporation into the United Nations Command. After 1948, American military and economic and military aid was meant as a means of

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54. For the text, see Bevans (1972, 479).

strengthening US power and influence in South Korea. In this sense even in the absence of the 1948 agreement Korea would have started its integration into America's informal empire.

Vietnam and Indonesia in Korea's Shadow: The Politics of War and Empire, 1945–1949

On August 15, 1945, President Truman sent the instruments for the surrender of Japan, otherwise known as General Order No. 1, to General MacArthur, who was still in Manila but had just been named Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers for the occupation. Under the terms of the surrender, Japanese soldiers in the Philippines, Korea south of the 38th parallel, Japan, the Ryukyus, and Japan's South Pacific islands were to surrender to American military forces. This geographical frame is very significant for understanding America's power and influence in Asia throughout the Cold War. The territories mentioned in the order formed the core of the American government's hegemony in the region, including the sometimes-neglected South Pacific, where the United States military conducted a series of atomic and hydrogen bomb tests in the atolls from 1946 to 1962.

Strategically, the Southeast Asian region had initially been shared between Britain and the United States, with MacArthur's forces responsible for Indochina, Java, and other islands in the region while British soldiers oversaw the rest of the mainland area and the island of Sumatra.[55] In response to discussions about altering these boundaries to favor an extended British role in Indonesia, in February 1945, MacArthur opposed re-jigging the existing agreement, arguing that an American role in assisting the Dutch back to Batavia (Jakarta) and the island of Java would have "the

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55. For the boundaries, established in August 1943, see United States Department of State (1970, 1000–1003). A slightly earlier draft of the boundaries by the British Chiefs of Staff had Indochina in their sphere of influence, indicating their early hope to shape the return of France to their colonial territories in Southeast Asia. See United States Department of State (1970, 969–971).

most favorable repercussions throughout the Far East and would raise the prestige of the United States to the highest level with results that would be felt for a great many years" (McMahon 1981, 79). The comment highlights MacArthur's ignorance of the anti-colonial forces that were about to explode across colonial Asia in 1945. Over the next few months, he came to believe that returning Dutch rulers to Indonesia might overextend resources needed for the invasion of Japan. British officials, on the other hand, wanted to control more of the region themselves, partly to ward off the consequences of the American government's anti-colonialist inclinations[56] and also to facilitate the return of Holland and France to the region as colonial masters.

Within the context of the boundaries of General Order No. 1, Korea's experience with decolonization was unique because it was the only colony in the region to be permanently partitioned. Korea's decolonization has been suspended and delayed because of its partition since 1945 and because of the traumatic civil and international violence that followed from that division. Korea, however, was not the only colony in Eastern Asia to be partitioned in 1945: for decades Korea and Vietnam shared the same fate of experiencing overwhelming violence in war in the aftermath of a big power partition.

Vietnam's partition occurred in July 1945, at the Potsdam Conference, which divided the territory, as well as Laos, at the 16th parallel between Great Britain in the south and Nationalist China in the north. Like Korea, Vietnam's partition was a sleight of hand of big power diplomacy, and the Vietnamese population had no say in the breakup of their territory. Like Koreans, Vietnamese welcomed the end of the war by declaring independence, in their case on September 2, 1945. This was done in the name of the newly formed Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), under the leadership of the Ho Chi Minh. Ho was willing to work with the United States, and hoped the Truman government would support Vietnamese

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56. See McMahon (1981, 76–79). As a result of changes made at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, Britain gained strategic control over Java and French Indochina south of the 16th parallel. In these areas, Japanese soldiers were ordered to surrender to the forces of the Supreme Commander, Southeast Asia Command, Lord Louis Mountbatten, the wartime British admiral who would, two years after the release of General Order No. 1, oversee the devastating decolonization of Britain's South Asian empire.

independence from France. Although during World War II there was sentiment in the US government, including that of President Roosevelt, that aligned against French colonial power in Indochina, as early as the spring of 1942, Roosevelt's advisor, Sumner Welles, told the French ambassador to the US that "the government of the United States recognizes the sovereign jurisdiction of the people of France over the territory of France and over French possessions overseas" (Thorne 1976, 83). Significantly, military opinion also favored France's return, and under Truman a policy emerged which assisted French government efforts to retake control over its former colonial territories. In August 1945 France lacked the means and resources to access Indochina, and British officials undertook the initial occupation of the territory, along with China. The government of British Prime Minister Clement Attlee also consistently aided France's return to its previous territories in the region. In assisting French troops to overthrow the DRV government in Saigon on September 23, 1945, however, British soldiers helped to spark the Vietnam War.[57]

Unlike the Korean partition, the 16th parallel was erased as a border by another big power agreement in early 1946 that arranged for the withdrawal of Chinese troops in northern Vietnam and their replacement by French soldiers.[58] At this point, French officials accommodated the DRV, but by November and December 1946 French and Vietminh troops were at war: hopes for independence in 1945 were replaced by the suffering of human violence. Korea and Vietnam were different in that the latter experienced a return of its former colonial big power, which ignited deeply felt anti-colonial feelings throughout Indochina, thus greatly simplifying the mobilization of popular sentiment against France. By contrast, Korea's occupation by the powers that defeated the Japanese colonial empire facilitated a degree of tolerance of the Soviet Union and the United States. During the peasant and union strikes of the fall of 1946, for example, when

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57. For Thorne on Attlee's policies see Thorne (1976, 85). On the start of the war, see Goscha (2016, chapter 7).
58. Only later, in 1954 at Geneva, did a semi-permanent agreement (though also one meant to be temporary) divide Vietnam at the 17th parallel between rival southern and northern regimes.

Koreans attacked police linked to the colonial era, they did not target Americans, but the hated Korean police who had operated in colonial times.[59]

The conflict in Vietnam was more complicated than an anti-colonial war, since political competition, coalition-building, and fighting occurred between Vietnamese of different political persuasions, from 1945 onwards. The Vietnamese civil war was not only a product of political alignments tied to a resurgent colonial state, on the one hand, and the Viet Minh, on the other. It was also a conflict that brought groups of a wide range of political, ideological, and religious backgrounds both in coalition and against each other. Ho's position in Vietnam was something akin to that of Kim Il-sung in northern Korea, insofar as both had only returned to their native countries during or at the end of World War II, and there were other communist leaders operating in both countries. Unlike Kim, Ho was not known within Vietnam and, perhaps most significantly, lacked the sponsorship of a big power, a key element of Kim Il-sung's rise to pre-eminence, though in the period under discussion Kim also operated in the context of a rather complex coalition of individuals. While southern Korea experienced significant violence between 1946 and 1950, the north was comparatively quiescent. By contrast, in southern Vietnam the military situation was immediately fraught and the northern portions of the country had already come under attack by France by the end of 1946. Interestingly, while communists in the south had been a major force in radical politics until 1940, anticommunist repression and the death of a prominent Vietnamese radical in 1943 facilitated the rise of the north, and, most importantly, southern China, as a strong base for Vietnamese communism (Goscha 2016, 192–194).

In this history, China's geography played an important role in shaping

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59. During the Korean War, when South Korean foreign minister Pyun Yung-tai was asked by a US television host in late 1952 what the South Korean government would do if Japanese troops were brought to South Korea, he responded by suggesting that the two Koreas fighting each other would align together against Japan: "Well, we might be forced to fight Japanese first instead of fighting the communists." See "Longines chronoscope with Dr. Yung Tai Pyun" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7htLQ54JVDQ [11:45]).

the dynamics of the early post-World War II Korean and Vietnamese communist movements. In both northern Korea and northern Vietnam, the project of a double liberation, now both from colonial and pre-colonial Korean and Vietnamese inheritances, as well as from the threat of southern Korea and the French presence, was tied in significant ways to China. The Chinese civil war had a greater impact in the short term on Korea than it did on Vietnam because of the large numbers of ethnic Korean soldiers who fought in Chinese armies in Manchuria and who entered North Korean armies from 1947 onwards. Of course, China's role in turning back United Nations forces on the peninsula in 1950 and 1951 prevented the collapse of the northern regime. Ironically, for the Viet Minh, in the north, it was Chinese nationalist armies who shielded them for a time before their war with France began in late 1946, and even this short period was very important for the longer-term survival of the DRV (Goscha 2016, chapter 7).[60]

In the short term, American policymakers, concerned with the spread of communism, provided the French government with significant military assistance, especially after the success of the Chinese Revolution and the expansion of the conflict in Korea. At the same time, policy over the long term aimed to achieve what had been established in the Philippines and South Korea: a state with internal autonomy and tied closely to America's foreign international policies, anticommunist most of all. Though it is often correctly and appropriately argued that Korea acted as a model for American containment strategy in Southeast Asia, it is also important to recognize what came before Korea and what transpired in the Philippines and elsewhere also shaped what was done in Vietnam.

The revolution in Indonesia presents a different case of revolution

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60. At war's end Chiang Kai-shek was critical of European colonial powers, for example referring to Britain, France, and Holland as "the imperialist governments," demanding that British officials not return to Hong Kong, while denying British entry into Chinese ports. By contrast, Prime Minister Winston Churchill had told President Franklin Roosevelt's ambassador to China, Patrick Hurly, that "Hongkong will be eliminated from the British Empire only over my dead body" (United States Department of State 1969a, 331, 500–501, 545–546).

from Korea and Vietnam in that it was given momentum by the Japanese occupiers themselves, partly a function of the November 1943 Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere conference that declared territories within the sphere would achieve independence from the west, prosperity, and freedom from racial discrimination. Delegates at the conference were collaborating elites from Burma, China, India, Manchukuo, and the Philippines. No representatives came from Japan's colonies of Korea or Taiwan, which were excluded from independence, reflecting Japan's assimilationist policies in those areas.[61] In general, the wartime era was critical in fostering the postwar Indonesian revolution. Soon after the start of their occupation, Japanese army authorities dispensed with the Dutch language, and replaced it with Indonesian. They produced school books in Indonesian that criticized Dutch colonial rule, thus advancing a sense of national identity, even though the various islands were ruled in a manner that prevented interactions between the people living on them. Compared to other areas of Southeast Asia such as the Philippines, the transition to Japanese rule in Indonesia was relatively peaceful, and the moderate early occupation policies on Java encouraged cooperation by nationalists like Sukarno who would later play dominant roles in the revolution. Unlike the Philippines or Korea, where landed elites were significant players in the colonial economy, the plantation economies of Indonesia "were not tied to the interests of any important indigenous political force" (Reid 2011, 155). The type of land reform demanded in Korea and the Philippines did not receive strong support among revolutionaries in Indonesia. Furthermore, as Japan's rulers turned towards more autarkic policies during the war, the older export-oriented system in Indonesia unraveled, separating peasants from tea or sugar plantations and providing them with a sense of emancipation. In 1943, the creation of militia known as "Defenders of the Homeland," or PETA, though meant for imperial defense, eventually formed a core of the Indonesian army-in-being after 1945 (Reid 2011, 152–167).

There were embedded contradictions in Japanese colonial practice, especially since the major objective of the soldiers was to integrate Indonesia

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61. See Jean Taylor (2003, 313). Vietnam and Malaya were also excluded from the meeting.

into a Japanese-led regional hierarchical system. As Ethan Mark has remarked, the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere was linked to "an anti-imperialist ideology that was at the same time laden with colonial assumptions and emphatically centered on Japanese interests" (Mark 2018, 100). Socio-economic conditions on the Indonesian islands deteriorated significantly from 1943, and high inflation combined with severe shortages of foodstuffs to create widespread misery and premature death, echoing the terrible famine that afflicted Vietnam in 1944–1945 and greatly reinforced the authority of the Viet Minh.[62]

Near the end of the war, in April 1945, the Japanese government on Java told the Indonesian public that it would form a committee which would make recommendations to the emperor about a new model of government for an independent Indonesia. After the dropping of the atomic bomb in early August, a Japanese military commander stated, in a contradiction, that an independent Indonesia would be established that would declare war on the allies and fight under the command of Japanese soldiers. This new independent state was thus meant as a means to combat the expected landing of allied military units. Sukarno was supposed to coordinate the announcement of independence with the Japanese, but he was taken away forcefully by Indonesian youths (pemuda) who required him and his supporters to make a unilateral declaration of independence, in the absence of Japanese. This was done on August 17, 1945, and British troops did not arrive in Jakarta in significant numbers for a number of weeks, giving Indonesians and Japanese a good amount of time to organize the new government (Taylor 2003, 321–323). By the time of the arrival of the British forces, which included many colonial troops from India, Japanese administration had effectively ended. Sukarno, appointed president by Japanese forces, had established a constitution, cabinet, federal government structure, and the beginnings of a standing army (People's Peace Preservation Corps), supported by pemuda (McMahon 1981, 84–85). Sukarno had spoken earlier in the year about a new country in which the

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62. For a discussion of socio-economic conditions across the Japanese Empire during the war, consult Booth (2007, chapter 8).

sovereign people of Indonesia would be "undifferentiated by class age, wealth, religion, or gender" (Taylor 2003, 322). Ethnicity was missing from the list, and attacks on Chinese Indonesians occurred during the revolution. The claim about religion did not apply to Christian Ambonese and Indonesian Muslims who were involved in a communal civil war. In Aceh, local Muslim religious leaders led attacks against the landowners and their allies who had collaborated with both Dutch and Japanese colonial officials (Taylor 2003, 329–330). Multiple civil conflicts were thus a defining element of the Indonesian revolution, as groups used the vacuum of power to avenge perceived past injustices. Yet the wider goal of achieving "*merdeka*" (freedom), national independence, and statehood was widespread. And, as in Korea and Vietnam, the violence was complicated by big power politics.

Even before British troops arrived, fighting broke out between Japanese and Indonesian forces, partly over access to weapons (McMahon 1981, 86). As in China, Japanese soldiers aligned with the allies, in this case Dutch and British. They were thus counter-revolutionary forces against Indonesia's anti-colonial revolution.[63] On October 11, a telegram from the Allied Land Forces in Southeast Asia reported that, on the island of Java, Japanese soldiers had yet to be disarmed because they were "required to help maintain law and order." Beyond the city of Batavia, Indonesians were "in complete control.[64] Louis Mountbatten, head Britain's Southeast Asian Command, recognized the limits of British military power and told the Japanese general on Java that Japanese soldiers would be responsible for maintaining order on the island (Bayly and Harper 2007, 172). Japanese were also active on Sumatra. At the end of February 1946, the American Commanding General of the India-Burma Theatre, Major General Vernon Evans, wrote that the prestige of the Japanese army on the island of Sumatra was "rising steadily as result of their bold clearing of several trouble areas." His comments foreshadowed Dutch intransigence and inclination to wield

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63. In China and Indonesia some Japanese soldiers joined communist and anti-colonial armies.

64. "ALFSEA to Troopers," October 11, 1945, NARA, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940–1948, RG 407, Box 1108.

colonial violence: Dutch sources maintained that "despite Jap brutality, their[s] is only method to control 'natives.'"[65]

On Java, the presence of British troops angered revolutionaries, who attacked at the end of October. British soldiers were in a contradictory position created by their government: they were there to aid the return of Dutch sovereignty, but had indicated a willingness to negotiate with the republican government in an initial effort to disarm Japanese soldiers. They were now the targets of the Indonesian revolution. British officials had already told Dutch authorities their aversion to fight for the Dutch empire, and wanted politicians to negotiate a settlement with the nationalists. In turn, Dutch political leaders blamed British soldiers for inaction and fueling the momentum of the "collaborators" who should be brought to justice (Bayly and Harper 2007, 173–174; McMahon 1981, 94–97).

Significant fighting broke out between British forces and Indonesians in the city of Surabaya, in November. By this time Dutch authorities were building their military and political base in Batavia, and agreed to a truce with the Indonesian republican government in late 1946, just before the departure of British soldiers. Over 1947–1949, Dutch forces launched two *police actions* that resulted in huge territorial gains from the republicans, especially Sumatra and much of the island of Java (Taylor 2003, 334–337). These conflicts were a source of much debate at the UN Security Council, as the violence had significant meaning for postwar alignments in the Global South in relation to big power diplomatic positioning over colonialism and decolonization. The United States government articulated contradictory policies towards Holland, wanting both to support its Atlantic ally yet fearing that Dutch bloodshed in Indonesia would anger public opinion across colonial and postcolonial Asia, providing momentum for communist movements. There was deep foreboding within policymaking circles to move beyond relatively mild criticisms of Dutch policy at the UN, for example by levying sanctions against the Dutch or by threatening to withdraw US economic assistance. In the United States, however, organizations such as the

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65. "COMGEN IB to WARGTWO," February 22, 1946, NARA, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, World War II Operations Reports, 1940–1948, RG 407, Box 1124.

Congress of Industrial Organizations and the NAACP openly criticized the second Dutch war against Indonesian republicans. In early 1949, two other developments contributed to a hardening of US policy against Holland: the Indian government's decision to convene a pan-Asian conference in Delhi to condemn the Hague's colonial policies, and a Republican-led resolution in the US Senate demanding that Washington withhold Marshall Plan aid and other economic assistance from Holland until the Dutch government ceased its military attacks. These public pressures moved the Truman administration to articulate a more forceful diplomacy, and in late March 1949 Secretary of State Dean Acheson privately explained to Dutch Foreign Secretary Dirk Stikker that Holland's policies in Indonesia threatened the loss of America's large economic aid program (McMahon 1981, 251–294). Since this aid was valuable, and indeed indirectly subsidized the Dutch military actions in Indonesia, Holland agreed to transfer sovereignty to Indonesia in late 1949, marking the new country's formal independence as a state, though significant issues tied to the legacies of colonial rule and decolonization persisted for decades (Taylor 2003, 336).

The history of conflict and decolonization in Vietnam and Indonesia highlights ways in which Cold War politics could constrain America's support for the European colonial powers, while also underlining the ongoing importance of anticommunism in US foreign policy in the early aftermath of World War II. The trajectory of imperialism, civil conflict, and revolution in Indochina and Indonesia also accentuates the underlying importance of economic factors, both as motivating forces for European re-colonization and in shaping the Dutch decision to abandon colonial violence in Indonesia in 1949. Additionally, the character of America's evolving empire in the core area of its hegemony in Asia, including the Philippines and southern Korea, was intimately impacted by the history of American capital. For, unlike European and Japanese colonialism, United States governments had acquired, through continental conquest, a vast territory and had engineered the land using the productive and inventive techniques of capital to create the globe's dominant economic base. Even by the late 1920s, the American economy exceeded the productivity of the combined economies of next six big powers: Germany, Great Britain, France, the Soviet

Union, Japan, and Italy. Just before the onset of the Great Depression, the US share of world manufacturing was almost quadruple that of the second-place power, Germany.[66] By the end of World War II, America's productive capacity relative to the rest of the world had increased again, while the European and Japanese economies suffered wartime destruction. The Soviet economy was devastated by war, and the Soviet Union even experienced famine early in the postwar era. The productivity of the American domestic economy, along with an ideology shaped by the American Revolution, with its inherent contradictions, created a wider frame in which empire-building was structurally different from the history of overseas colonial empires. This was not a history of exceptionalism, however, but of the wider dynamics of capitalism, combined with a determined postwar political drive to global hegemony and big power status.

Conclusion: Inheriting Empire, Reproducing Hegemony

In the early 20th century, Koreans and Filipinos, together with many colonized peoples around the world, sought to address and overturn oppressive political and social conditions within their societies. They identified not only structures of colonial rule, but also social groups at home who buttressed the colonial project, especially landowners who benefited from the labor of subject populations. Imposition of colonial rule heightened critiques of existing inequities, and the Russian and Chinese Revolutions opened new avenues for responding to several layers of unequal power structures. By the 1920s and 1930s, liberation was increasingly defined in terms of eliminating colonialism and transforming social relations between peasant and landlord. A distinguishing feature between *left* and *right* was the former's greater determination to counter the dual oppression of colonial system and collaborator through structural change of society. The American

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66. In 1929, America's share of world manufacturing output was 43 percent. For a broad-based discussion of the United States and other big powers in the interwar global economy, consult Kennedy (1987, chapter 6).

military leadership's decision to align with the conservative landlord and anticommunist political leaders of the Philippines and Korea was a determining feature of their wartime and early postwar occupations. For the main generals of occupation, Douglas MacArthur and John Hodge, the landed classes, while the least well-organized within both societies in 1945 as a result of their cooperation with Japan, were the preferred collaborators of the new American military regimes because they were perceived as pro-American and opposed *communism*. People's committees, however, represented popular coalitions of people of different political persuasions who were willing to work with the American occupiers.

In their common search for answers to the colonial-societal crisis, anti-imperial Koreans and Filipinos had had a connected history prior to 1945, anchored in multiple third countries, including China, which itself had undergone one revolution in 1911 and was in the process of experiencing a second and even third revolution in the 1920s and beyond. China's revolutionary history in the twentieth century—not exclusively or even predominantly a communist one until World War II—was key in bringing together anti-colonial leaders from all over Asia and the world. These leaders' visions of liberation and emancipation went unrealized in their lifetimes in good part because of the role their compatriots played—in collaboration with American forces—in defeating their goals in the 1940s. In the case of southern Korea, in addition to the occupying American authorities, police rooted in the colonial era united with radical right youth groups to commit violence against cadres of the Korean People's Republic. In the Philippines, the US army fought Hukbalahaps during the war, working closely with Filipino guerrillas and facilitating and instigating civil conflict amongst the population. In their relatively brief occupation of the island of Luzon in 1945–1946, soldiers contained Hukbalahap adherents and institutions and undertook a major effort to disarm the former combatants. The postwar conflict with Hukbalahap continued under Manuel Roxas and his successors, in conjunction with the Philippine Constabulary and army. Unlike the Philippines, Korea's civil war was internationalized due to the postwar division at the 38th parallel, direct competition with the Soviet Union, and America's continued efforts to bring Korea to the attention of

the United Nations as a means of giving global legitimacy to its policy on the peninsula. The American military occupations of the Philippines and Korea and the creation of anticommunist proxy states in the Republic of the Philippines (1946) and the Republic of Korea (1948) were central to the construction and reproduction of America's hegemony across Eastern Asia. These projects were intimately tied to the administration of Japan and retention of the emperor, who symbolized Meiji Japan's early 20th-century imperium, now managed by the Supreme Commander as America's new empire in Eastern Asia.

Early in the postwar era, the two proxies interacted with each other, with the senior American ally taking the lead. Between 1948 and 1953 the Philippine government supported US policy in Korea, as Filipinos served both on the United Nations' Temporary Commission on Korea that oversaw elections leading to the creation of the first Korean republic and in military units during the Korean War in the early 1950s. In this way, the structures of American power in the region came together in the Cold War of the 1940s and 1950s to sustain the violence of Korea's civil war.

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